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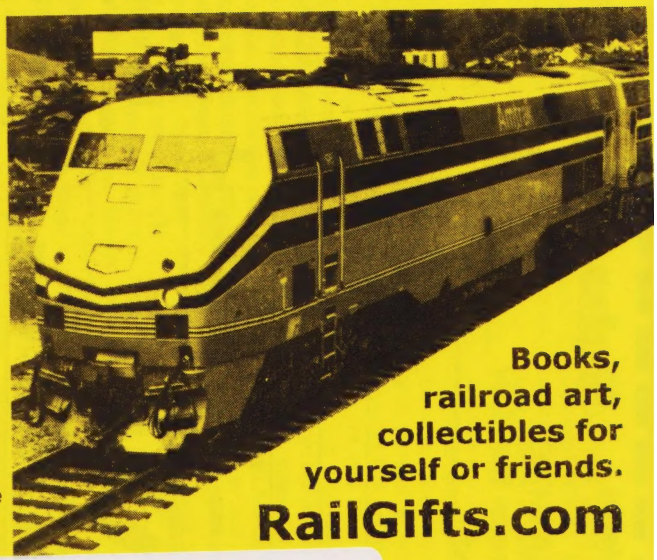

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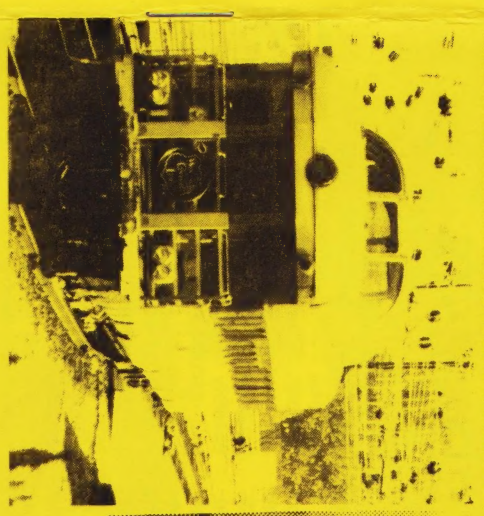

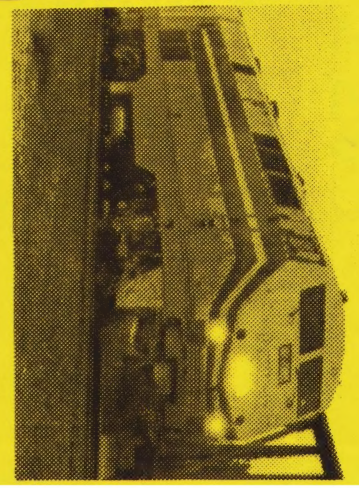

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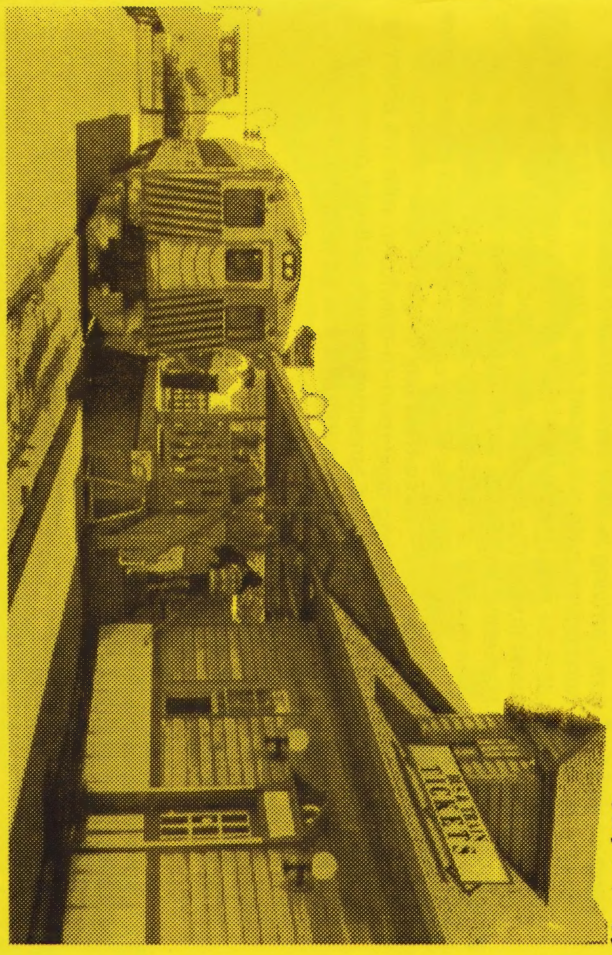

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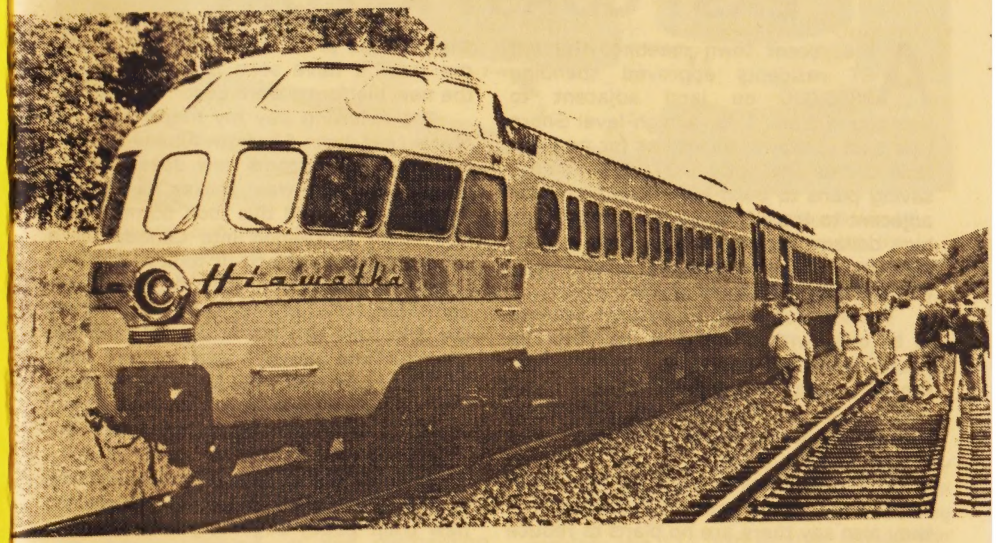

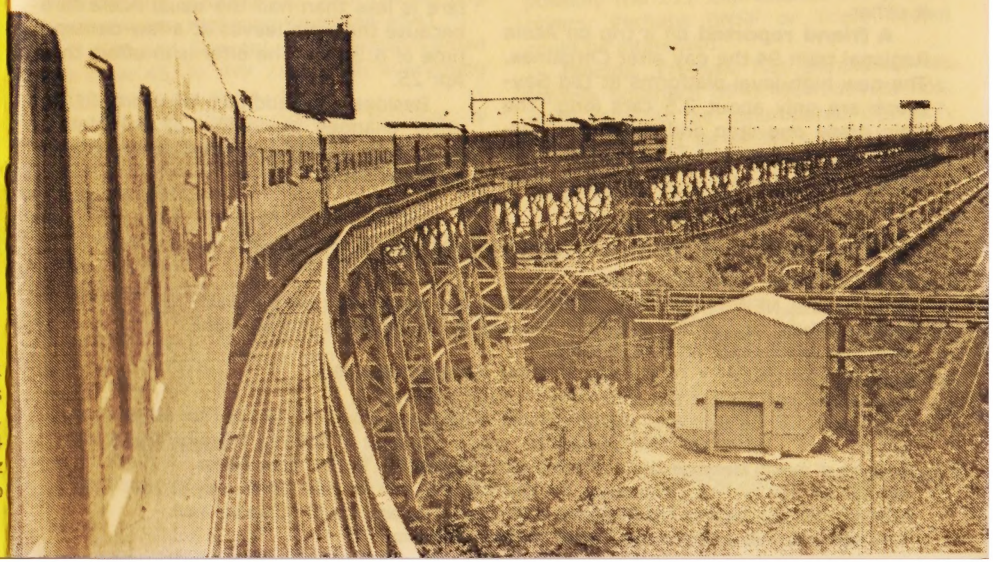

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"WASHINGTON – Amtrak will introduce a 10th Acela Express roundtrip between Boston and New York on Monday, providing new midday departures for business travelers. The new southbound train will depart Boston South Station at 11:15 a.m., arriving in New York at 2:42 p.m. and Washington at 5:47 p.m. A new northbound train will depart New York at 12:03 p.m., arriving in Boston at 3:33 p.m. 'The new Acela Express departures will give travelers more options during the midday hours,' said Barbara Richardson, Vice President of Marketing and Sales. Acela Express is largely responsible for a dramatic shift in the number of travelers choosing the train over airline shuttles. Currently, Amtrak commands 40 percent of the air/rail market share between Boston and New York – more than any single airline. Passengers enjoy the convenience of traveling downtown-to-downtown with the ability to conduct business en route. Onboard amenities include 120-volt power outlets at every seat, conference tables with seating for four people, and a bistro-style café car with draught beer service."

—Amtrak press release, Jan 27.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Grand Prize: Trip or two (2) to New York, NY for the Big East Men's Basketball Championship Tournament, includes 3 nights hotel accommodations at the Waldorf-Astoria® hotel, 2 tickets to the semi-finals, March 14 and 15. Plus $100 gift certificates to Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and Macy's..."

—From e-mail message received from Amtrak Jan 23.

(We'll take the two trips.)

CARS & CONSISTS

***Silver Star**, train 91, Sebring FL Jan 9: engines 19 & 67 (Genesis); cars Horizon coaches 54008, 54547, 54556, 54580, 54525, 44550, baggage 1541 & 1712, dorm 2504, Viewliner sleepers 62020, 62041, 62038, diner 8553, dinette 28003, Amcoaches 25027, 25113, 25066, 25104. Horizon coaches were deadheading to Miami for part of School Safety Patrol Special from West Palm Beach to Washington DC later in the month. The Sebring agent said the special train has been running every year for over 40 years.—Bob Stewart.

***Acela Express**, train 2104, Newark NJ Nov 27: (set #9) 2035 power car, 3415 end, 3547 business coaches, 3307 café/bistro, 3542 & 3544 business coaches, 3219 end 1st/galley, 2039 power car. Same, train 2155: (set #18) 2023 power car, 3404 end, 3535 biz coaches, 3311 café/bistro, 3501, 3521 biz coaches, 3201 end 1st galley, 2025 power car. Same, train 2157 (set #16) 2013 power car, 3407 end, 3514 biz coaches, 3313 café/bistro, 3550, 3515 biz coaches, 3205 end 1st/galley, 2012 power car. Same, train 2113, Washington DC Nov 29: (set #19) 2021 power car, 3406 end, 3513 biz coaches, 3309 café/bistro, 3517, 3512 biz coaches, 3202 end 1st/galley, 2024 power car. (Noted at Philadelphia: sets #14 & 4, both days. No. 14 had the nose open, possibly due to a breakdown on the road and rescued by an HHP-8, while #4 is the final set to be acceptance-tested, just recently delivered from Barre VT.)

***Metroliner** train 106, Newark NJ Nov 27: engine 917 (AEM-7AC); cars 44967, 21979, 21710 coaches, 43356 full dinette, 44729, 44953 biz coaches, 48992 full 1st class.

***Keystone** train 642, Newark NJ Nov 27: engine 904 (AEM-7AC); cars 21659, 21658, 21196, 20050 café as coach.

***Holiday Special** train 1095, Newark NJ Nov 27: engine 929 (AEM-7AC); cars w20038 café & w20048 café as coaches, 82024, w21150 & 21440 coaches, 48224 split dinette, 21151 coach, 44183 biz coach. ("w" prefix notes new "wave" logo paint scheme.)—James Langan.

ON THE COVER

In this issue Alex Mayes takes us to two special excursions that were run in Sep 2002 to mark the end of operations on the Erie Mining Company railroad in Minnesota.

In the upper photo, the special trains included the end car "Cedar Rapids", a former Milwaukee Road Sky Top observation car, which had been meticulously restored to its original grandeur. The car provided first-class service on the trips. Here it was photographed as passengers on the Saturday trip were re-boarding after a runby at Cramer tunnel.

A highlight of the trips was crossing a huge ore dock above Lake Superior at the end of the line at Taconite Harbor. Erie Mining Company trains would move slowly across the dock and drop tons of taconite pellets from each car into huge metal bins below to store them before loading into holds of lake ships. While this line may not be used to haul taconite in the near future, talks are underway to move coal over the line to a power plant at Taconite Harbor. Photos by the author.

EAST COAST REPORT

At a recent town meeting, Guilford CT residents approved spending $880,000 on land adjacent to westbound track 1 for a high-level Shore Line East platform, as well as for parking. Now comes the state DOT with money-saving plans to build high-level platforms adjacent to track 2 only. This would save big dollars by eliminating the other platform, the overhead walkways, elevators, etc., between them.

The Madison First Selectman seemed to be okay with this, but in Branford the First Selectman was most unhappy with the DOT, commenting that its only function was to lay blacktop and that at the new station there would be nothing but a platform and a "tin room".

The DOT currently sees no new additional Shore Line East train service, but they also say there are no plans to reduce it either.

A friend reported on a trip on Acela Regional train 94 the day after Christmas. The new high-level platforms at Old Saybrook are only about 3.5 cars long. The train made *one* stop and extra-fare passengers from Business Class had to walk several cars to exit. I don't think they should have to do this. Why not double the stop? I have seen this done before the new platforms were built.

The following day my friend rode the *Maple Leaf*, train 63, from Albany to Oakville ON. US Customs now does an "exit check" after the train makes its Niagara Falls NY stop, and this took 55mins. The train then proceeded into Canada for a 45-min customs check. It took nearly two hours from the time they departed Niagara Falls NY until they left Niagara Falls ON. The train had left Albany 15mins late (due to "late power") and Niagara Falls ON departure was 1:22 late. If they keep this up, international train service will surely be killed off.—Bob Underwood.

Amtrak announced a special low $59 Washington-NY fare for *Acela Express*, on new train 2118, beginning Jan 27. That fare is less than half the usual *Acela* fare because the train leaves at a low-demand time of 8:30pm. The offer is in effect thru Apr 25.

Besides the addition of train 2118, other changes made Jan 27 for Metroliners and *Acelas* are listed at the top of the next page.

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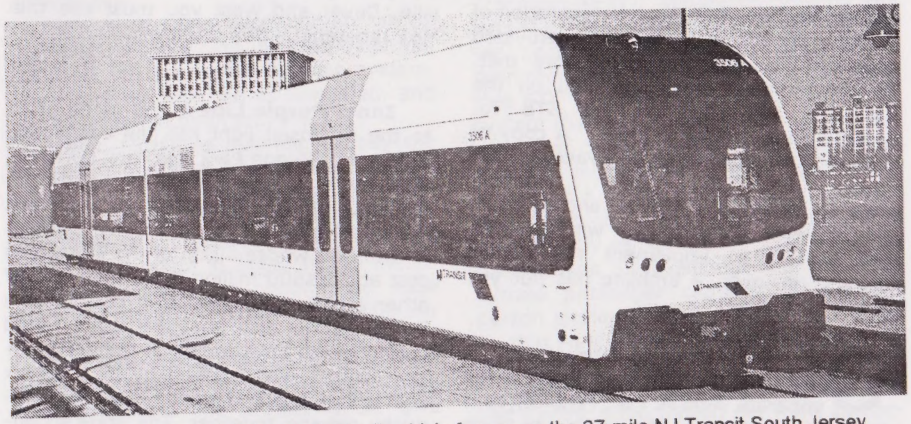
Direction	New	Replaced	Leave Station	Arrive & Leave Station	Arrive Station
NB	M104	AX2104	8:00am WAS	- -	10:48am NYP
NB	AX2158	M106	9:00am WAS	11:43am 12:03pm NYP	3:33pm BOS
NB	AX2118	None	8:30pm WAS	- -	11:32pm NYP
SB	AX2163	M119	11:15am BOS	2:42pm 3:00pm NYP	5:47pm WAS
SB	M117	AX2113	2:00pm NYP	- -	4:59pm WAS

—James Langan.



A German-built diesel-electric light rail vehicle for use on the 37-mile NJ Transit South Jersey light rail line, which will connect Trenton and Camden. Except for street-running in Camden, the line will use a former Pennsylvania Railroad right of way that has not seen passenger service since 1963. The light rail line will open in Oct 2003. Trains will run every 20mins.—Bruce Russell; photo dated Dec 15, 2002.

Amtrak's announced changes effective Feb 10 affect the *Pennsylvanian, Three Rivers* and Keystones: Train 43 *Pennsylvanian* weekdays lv NYP at 7:10am, Philadelphia 8:45am, arrive Pittsburgh 4pm, making all stops as a Keystone service train NY-Harrisburg, picking up and discharging passengers, replacing Keystone #641.

Sat and Sun only, the *Pennsylvanian* is train 45, lv NYP 7am, with everything else the same as no. 43.

Train 42, *Pennsylvanian*, Mon-Sat, lv Pittsburgh 7:30am, Phila. 3:10pm, ar NY 4:43pm, same as above, without replacing a Keystone.

Train 44, *Pennsylvanian*, Sunday only, lv Pittsburgh 1:30pm, Phila. 8:55pm, ar NY 10:50pm, same as above, without replacing a Keystone.

New train 611 Keystone Sunday only: lv Phila. 3pm, ar Harrisburg 4:55pm. It is a renumbering of train 607.

Train 661 Keystone Sunday only: renumbered from 615, supposedly to place the train number in the lower 600 series.

Train 40 *Three Rivers* daily: lv Chicago 10:30pm (1:30 later), lv Phila. 5:30pm (1:05 later), ar NY 8:04pm (56mins later). No changes westbound on #41.

The *Pennsylvanian*, of course, will no longer serve stations west of Pittsburgh.

Amtrak has advertised in Railway Age announcing the sale of express box cars and some RoadRailers, including possibly the 111 Expresstrak refrigerator railers. Perhaps BNSF or Triple Crown could be interested.

Florida Tri-Rail has purchased six Norfolk Southern GP49 locomotives, nos. 4600-4605, to be renumbered 812-817. They were built as GP39X's for the former Southern Railway at 2600hp and later upgraded to 2800hp.—James Langan.

Amtrak announced Jan 31 that the *Downeaster* will be allowed a faster speed limit:

WASHINGTON- Amtrak hailed today's unanimous decision by the Surface Transportation Board (STB) authorizing maximum train speeds of 79 mph on sections of track used by the Downeaster. Since its introduction on December 15, 2001, the Downeaster has operated at a

slower speed - ıph - while the STB considered autho ıg 79 mph. The STB decision may result in reduced travel time between Portland and Boston. Today's ruling augments the STB's October 1999 decision that the newly rebuilt rail line between Plaistow, N.H., and Portland, Maine, would be adequate for operation of trains at speeds of up to 79 mph provided that certain track standards were met. Required testing was conducted on the line and submitted to the STB for consideration in spring 2002. A copy of the ruling is expected to be available next week on the STB Website, www.stb.dot.gov. Amtrak and NNEPRA plan to work cooperatively with Guilford Rail System to implement the higher speeds. However, a timeline has not yet been determined.

●●●

On a Feb 1 visit to New Haven CT Union Station I saw that three separate Amtrak "W" (Wallet) card timetables were in the rack, all with "Revised" in the upper left hand corner. The W8 (Toronto-NYP) and W5 (Springfield-Washington) are dated Oct 28, 2002, while the W4 (Newport News-Washington-NYP-Boston) carries a date of Jan 27, 2003. The W9, which shows only Metroliner and *Acela Express*, was old (Oct 28) and not revised, and thus does not show the added weekday *Acela*.

The Long Island Rail Road really put one over on me, as when I passed the big rack in NY's Penn Station the Sunday after Christmas I paused looking for the telltale "*" (asterisk) next to the effective date to indicate a reissue. There were none, so I moved on. I didn't realize it until a month later that the Port Jefferson had been revised Dec 23 and the Far Rockaway was revised on Dec 30. The revision date is farther down on the cover and I overlooked it. Current timetables are all dated Dec 16-Mar 16, 2003.

NJ Transit timetables for the Newark and Hoboken divisions were all reissued with an effective date of Jan 26, 2003. The early evening train from Hoboken to Hackettstown has been restored. It previously was a Montclair Heights to Hackettstown shuttle, whereby anyone from Hoboken destined to stops Great Notch through Mountain Lakes not only had to change trains at Montclair Heights, but also had to change at Broad Street Newark! This double-change remains in effect for two earlier departures from Hoboken, at 9:25 and 11:25am. The new "MBL" timetable now lists only the trains that run on that line. Two round trips that run via the M&E that were previously listed are no longer shown. For full-service Denville, Dover and west you must use the M&E timetable.—Bob Underwood.

●●●

Inner Purple Line is the name given to the proposed light rail line connecting Bethesda, College Park and New Carrolton MD. There is much political support for the line, but one stumbling block of sorts is Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan, whose vision of the line would cost about $600 million more than that of other area leaders. Those in conflict with Duncan note also that his plan would require more Environmental Impact Studies, delaying construction by perhaps six years. Still, the two sides have been gradually moving together. The state's Congressional delegation must submit their preferences for mass transit projects in about two months, so time is short for the two sides to reach an agreement.

Also pushing to get onto the list of transit preferences for Maryland are supporters of the Baltimore Regional Rail Plan. That plan is a comprehensive one that couldn't be funded all at once, but the apparent favorite is the Red Line, connecting Woodlawn and Fells Point, a $1.2 billion project. The entire Regional Rail Plan involves creating 66 more miles of passenger rail routes (there are now 43), including six transit lines in Baltimore and suburbs. The existing light rail and subway lines would be included in the resulting system. The whole Plan would cost about $12 billion.

The Champlain Flyer, the only rail commuter line in Vermont, will be suspended Mar 1. Gov. Douglas concluded that its costs are not offset by high enough usage. The Charlotte to Burlington route, 13 miles long, saw service begin in Dec 2000. It was to mitigate construction-caused congestion along Route 7, but that construction won't begin until summer, 2003. State officials said the train could possibly resume operation after highway construction gets underway if the need is evident. The feds must approve the service suspension.

State of Florida has found that four consortia of builders have entered the bidding to build the state's high-speed train system. The four are: Fluor-Bombardier (builder of *Acela*), Global Rail Consortium, Georgia Monorail Consortium and Et3.com. Their bids were said to differ widely.

New York City police said on Jan 12 that the third stabbing in three days had occurred on the city's subway system. They were all regarded as unrelated, and no suspects had been found yet.

Metro-North is planning to buy the Port Jervis line from Norfolk Southern RR, allowing it to control maintenance of the line and improve on-time performance. According to present plans, the sale would come about in 2006. In the meantime Metro-North will continue to lease the line from NS. M-N pays $500,000 per year for the lease.

East Side Access Project is expected to be funded ($75 million) in the FY2004 federal budget. The project would give the Long Island Rail Road access to Grand Central Terminal. No funding was listed in the new federal budget for the proposed Second Avenue subway, but it was given a "recommended" rating by the feds.

Metro-North announced good news about its 2002 performance: "...in the weekday commuter market, we carried 84% of those traveling to Manhattan's central business district. This marks the fourth straight year this share has increased. Since 1991, Metro-North has gained 14 share points in this market, mainly at the expense of the automobile. Our share of the weekday discretionary travel market also rose significantly in 2002 to 59%. For the first time, our market share of this group is at a significant advantage over the automobile. Finally, our share of the weekend discretionary travel market increased to its highest level in 2002—48%." M-N attributed these good results to its strong on-time performance over the years.

A new all-day bus service between Stewart International Airport and Metro-North's Beacon Station, the Dutchess County Transportation Center and the Park & Ride Lot on Route 17 in Newburgh was launched just after mid-January. M-N President Peter Cannito said at the inaugural, "People from all over the Hudson Valley will benefit from this marriage of convenience that joins the railroad's fast, reliable service with the growing Stewart Airport."

The year 2003 is Metro-North's 20th anniversary year.

What is Et3? The relatively unknown builder bidding on the Florida high-speed system is a promoter of Evacuated Tube Transport (ETT), apparently holding the patent on that technology, which has not yet been applied to mass transit. The promoter says on its Web site, et3.com, that ETT "is a new kind of transportation system that requires less than 2% of the energy of current transportation methods. It is also much safer, and can be faster... Anyone can visualize two tubes (one for each direction) along a travel route. Air is permanently removed from the tubes; so travel takes place without friction. Pressurized passenger capsules (like a 2-8 person airplane cabin) travel in the tubes on thin steel wheels or on nearly frictionless Maglev."

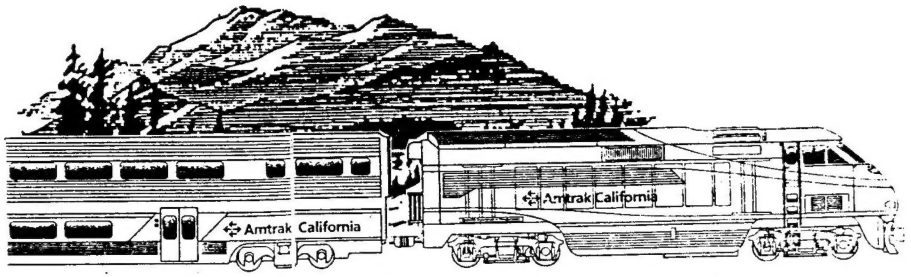
New York State's next budget has had almost $500 million cut from authorized transportation funding, leaving $5.1 billion. Specifically cut was funding for the Amtrak *Adirondack*. However, state officials said that there is enough money remaining to subsidize the train. Some of them spoke out for the value of the service to the state's economy.

MARC is the latest commuter agency to provide "quiet cars" on some of its trains. In Jan the cars began operation on two early-morning trains out of Baltimore and reportedly they were instant hits. MARC said that quiet cars would appear on all rush-hour trains if they are popular.

The former Camden Station in Baltimore may be rehabbed into a regional sports museum and offices. The station dates from 1856 and has seen a lot of history.

Philadelphia's 30th Street station will get a nine-level parking garage on its north side, connecting to the station via covered walkway crossing Arch Street. A bond sale for the $50 million project has been completed, and the building, which will house 1524 vehicles, should be completed in 14 months.

NJ Transit director George Warrington said in Jan that the South Jersey light rail line won't open until the fall (see photo on p. 3). The state allocated $9 million more to the project in January.



WEST COAST REPORT

The following analysis of the 2003 California state budget as it relates to transportation was issued by the Transit Riders Federation:

It is early in 2003, but it is quite apparent that it will be a critical year for transportation in California. On the positive side, about 1/3 of the state's legislators are new, providing an excellent opportunity to educate Members and staff on the importance of funding for transportation choices. Unfortunately, California is also facing a very real budget crisis. On January 10th, Governor Davis released his proposed budget for the 2003-04 fiscal year. Here is that proposal, and its specific effects on the transportation community:

California's current budget deficit is $34.6 billion. Back in December of 2002, in anticipation of this extreme deficit, Governor Davis released his mid-year budget reduction proposals, totaling about $10.2 billion out of this FY 2002-03. Of that $10.2 billion, roughly 20% ($1.8 billion) of the cuts hit transportation and transit funding, in 5 places:

1. $100 million in unspent funds in the Traffic Congestion Relief Fund (TCRF) will be returned to the General Fund.
2. $90 million in payments to cities and counties for local streets and roads maintenance will be eliminated.
3. Proposition 42, approved by voters in March, will be suspended. Prop. 42 required that all of the state's sales tax on gasoline revenues be transferred from the General Fund to the Transportation Investment Fund. As a result, $1.046 billion in transportation funding will be lost.
* $678 million was to go to 150 transit and highway projects identified by the state's Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP).
* $147 million was to go to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
* $147 million was to go to cities and counties for streets/roads.
* $74 million was to go to the Public Transportation Account.
4. A $500 million dedication to the TCRF from the General Fund will be eliminated.
5. An additional $25.3 million will be cut from other transportation funding programs.

Fortunately, Governor Davis' January 10th final budget proposal does not include any additional transportation cuts or reductions beyond the mid-year proposals.

While the latest budget calls for no more additional transportation funding cuts, the budget will affect transportation in several important ways:

1. The Vehicle License Fee (VLF) "backfill" payments will be reduced by $4 billion. This will have dire consequences for local governments and their projects, as this fee accounts for a significant portion of their General Fund revenues.
2. The budget will eliminate nearly 1,400 Caltrans engineering positions, severely handicapping projects associated with the Traffic Congestion Relief Plan.
3. Administrative responsibility for the High Speed Rail Program will be shifted from the Rail Commission to Caltrans.

It is important to note that most of the proposed cuts by the Governor require the significant 2/3-vote approval by the Legislature. Given the enormity of the deficit, and the controversial nature of the proposals, it is likely that there will be a protracted budget battle within the Legislature and between the Legislature and the Governor over the months to come.

(Transit Riders Federation is a California statewide consumer union working to improve public transportation in Calif. For more info, see www.odyssey.org)

Three Southern California people within nine days committed suicide before Metrolink trains. Thev either left suicide notes or other evidence that they were planning or contemplating suicide.

On Feb 5 a 15-year-old boy stood in front of train 311 in Covina shortly before 8am and was struck.

On Jan 30 a 37-year-old man in City of Industry parked his car on the rails awaiting the approach of a Metrolink train.

On Jan 27 a 52-year-old man in Glendale drove his SUV into the path of a Metrolink train.

Portland OR residents are complaining about Union Pacific railroad noise between Tacoma Street and the Brooklyn Yard. Back in 1956 the then Southern Pacific reached an agreement with local residents that regulated noise in the area. But UP said that a siding, Reed siding, rebuilt recently with assistance from the Oregon DOT, had been reactivated, but was covered by the 1956 agreement. The siding was designed to help on-time perf of the *Coast Starlight* by assisting in the maneuvering of freights around the Amtrak train. A UP spokesman said that without the siding the *Starlight* could easily lose 30mins at that location.

San Francisco Muni's Third-Street light rail construction is projected to continue until Mar 27. Drivers have been complaining about traffic jams created by the construction work, which requires some street closures. The $550 million project extends light rail along Third St and into the Bayview-Hunters Point area.

Sound Transit received a welcome approval from the feds on Feb 3: the Federal Transit Administration gave a "highly recommended" rating to the $2.1 billion Central Link light rail project, which would run light rail from downtown Seattle to near the Sea-Tac Airport, a distance of 14 miles. Also, the project has $75 million earmarked for it in the Administration's FY 2004 budget.

Sound Transit wants a total of $500 million in federal money to cover one quarter of the first light rail segment; it already has received about $91 million. Construction is projected to run to Tukwila by 2009 and to Sea-Tac by 2011.

Not everyone in Seattle is happy with Sound Transit and its light rail plan, of course. And their leaders were out in force on Feb 5 at a state Senate committee meeting when four bills seeking to destroy Sound Transit and/or its plan were discussed. One of them would seek to place an initiative on the ballot that would dissolve Sound Transit. All four bills are likely to be merged into a single bill, according to Sen. Jim Horn, chair of the Highways and Transportation Committee.

Caltrain is finalizing a proposed schedule change that will take effect Mar 3. The schedule change is intended to improve the connection with BART at the new Millbrae Intermodal Station. Many trains would be adjusted between three and 12mins to improve the transfer from one service to another. Caltrain's weekend replacement service—Route RRX—will also be adjusted when BART begins service to Millbrae. Caltrain will add the new Millbrae station to the Route RRX schedule. Caltrain held three public meetings for input on changes.—Caltrain.

Caltrain's 17 cars that will be used in the Baby Bullet service have all arrived, Caltrain said, and the first of the six locomotives is due in Feb. Full implementation of the Baby Bullet service, which includes construction of passing tracks, is planned for early 2004.

Caltrain expects to reinstate weekend train service in spring, 2004. In the meantime, its Route RRX bus substitution is operating.

Caltrain said it carried over 2600 New Year's Eve revelers home from San Francisco this year, "including some major night owls, who took the last southbound train at 1:45am". On President's Day, Feb 17, Caltrain will operate a modified schedule, with special timetables out soon.

Caltrain began in Jan an advertising campaign that features actual Caltrain patrons endorsing the train service. In newspaper and transit-vehicle ads a group of 11 users individually appear with their own personal reasons for riding. Their most popular reasons, Caltrain said, are (1) to make productive use of commute time, (2) to avoid traffic and parking hassles, (3) to relax and reduce stress, (4) to save money or wear-and-tear on the car, (5) to be able to bring a bike on board, (6) to help the environment, and (7) because of the friendly conductors.

The Capitol Corridor will see three UP track work projects between Feb 10 & 21, resulting in 15-45min delays to the *Capitols, San Joaquins, Coast Starlight, California Zephyr, Reno Fun Train* and *Reno Snow Train.* The three are at Albrae siding near Fremont (until Feb 21), Suisun Bridge (until Feb 13) and between Richmond and Martinez (until Feb 14).—Amtrak, Gene Poon.

RAIL CANADA

Transport 2000's John Pearce wrote the following reply to an article, "VIA Rail not eager to return to Regina", that appeared in the Jan 18 Leader-Post:

I'm not sure if Barry Prentice of the Transport Institute at University of Manitoba was in the transportation business in the late 1970s or 1980s. At that time, the original *Canadian* running on CP lines from Toronto through Winnipeg, Regina and Calgary to Vancouver was the most popular train in the country, based on passenger-miles traveled. It was virtually impossible to get sleeping accommodation on the train from late April up to late October.

Unfortunately, in January 1990 the number of transcontinental trains was reduced to only three round trips per week from the previous 14, despite strong ridership. I great number of tourists and local residents were denied access to a very popular form of travel.

Air travel is currently down by about 10% over two years ago, while VIA Rail traffic has grown anywhere that service is offered. This trend will likely continue as fuel and insurance charges boost the cost of both air and auto travel and security precautions intensify.

Passenger rail service is unique for several reasons. One train can serve many smaller cities and towns along its route, unlike the most common direct air services. Thus, a Winnipeg-Regina-Calgary service would also serve Brandon, Moose Jaw, Swift Current and Medicine Hat, communities which have little or no air service.

The onboard comfort and amenities also empower passenger rail to draw people from automobile travel, cutting energy use and pollution and greenhouse gas production, thus reducing global warming.

Malcolm Andrews of VIA public relations is correct when he states that VIA Rail cannot restore any services which will not make a profit. This is because the Crown Corporation is controlled by the federal Treasury Board and cabinet and is not allowed to do so.

Since almost no rail lines in the world make money, the reality is that only the Toronto to Ottawa or Montreal lines have any chance of breaking even and seeing improved service. Despite the fact that our taxes from all across the country keep VIA operating, significant investments are confined to the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle.

Residents of the Prairies or the Maritimes are continually told "there aren't enough of you to warrant improved service", but Ottawa continues to spend our national taxes on passenger rail improvements only in the central Canadian "corridor".

Passenger rail transportation will become more and more important in the future. Evidence of this has come in Bombardier's plans to test its new high-speed turbine passenger locomotive between Calgary and Edmonton.

It is time that Prairie citizens, media and provincial governments spoke up for the mobility alternatives afforded by good passenger train service.

Some Canadian consists: (All Feb 3 at Cedars, Quebec) VIA #56: F40 & 4 LRC cars: 6403, 3451, 3310, 3346 & 3348. VIA #51: 2 F40s & 3 LRC & 7 Renaissance cars: 6420, 3304, 3366, 3327, 6429, 7004, 7216, 7206, 7304, 7511, 7507 & 7505. VIA #50: F40 & 7 Ren. cars: 6414, 7005, 7204, 7210, 7306, 7506, 7509 & 7514. VIA #53: P42 & 3 LRC cars: 905, 3466, 3322 & 3350. VIA #61: P42 & 1 HEP & 4 LRC cars: 915, 4006, 3465, 3315, 3333 & 3341. VIA #69: P42 & 3 HEP cars: 912, 4000, 4120 & 4102. VIA #67: P42 & 5 cars: 904, 3475, 3601, 3308, MWHX1105 & 3357. VIA #65: P42 & 3 LRC cars: 900, 3452, 3365 & 3309. VIA #57: F40 & 5 HEP cars: 6436, 8618, 4001, 4113, 4103 & 4122.—Ron Hovorka.

Farewell to the Erie Mining Railroad

By Alex Mayes – Photos by the author

Saturday's train shortly after its arrival back at the taconite pellet processing facility in Hoyt Lakes. At the conclusion of each day's trip, the trains terminated at the facility.

Below: Photo run-bys were held at the east portal of Cramer tunnel, at milepost 62.4. This photo was taken on the Saturday trip, Sep 21, 2002.

Two special passenger trains were operated over the now-closed former Erie Mining Company's railroad between Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota and the huge ore dock over Lake Superior at Taconite Harbor over the weekend of Sep 21-22, 2002. The trips were run to mark the closing of the 72-mile rail line, which opened in 1957 to haul taconite pellets from the processing facilities at Hoyt Lakes to the ore dock to be loaded onto ships for lake transport to steel mills in the Midwest. Due to a significant downturn in the steel industry, the current owner of the Hoyt Lake facilities, Cleveland Cliffs, Inc., closed down the iron ore mining operations, the taconite processing plant and the railroad in 2001.

The two excursions were sponsored by the "Friends of the 261" and the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in cooperation with Cleveland Cliffs, Inc. The trips were fund-raisers for the two sponsoring groups, and fortunately both trips were

sellouts, with over 500 passengers riding each day.

The trains were powered by an unusual mix of historic diesels; in the lead was Erie Mining F9A No. 4211, the second unit was DM&IR SD18 NO. 193 sporting a new bright red paint scheme, and the third diesel was ex-Soo Line FP7A No. 2500A. The 15-car trains consisted of an assortment of historic coaches, lounges, dining cars and sleepers, and bringing up the markers was former Milwaukee Road Sky Top observation car "Cedar Rapids," which has been immaculately restored.

Both passenger specials originated at the now-closed taconite pellet plant at the Hoyt Lakes facility and proceeded east to Taconite Harbor on the north shore of Lake Superior, and then eased slowly across the ore dock high above the huge steel bins that used to store taconite pellets for lake shipment to steel mills. Once the trains had cleared the ore dock, they turned on a loop track and headed back to Hoyt Lakes.

Just before the Saturday trip departure a ceremony to formally donate F9A No. 4211 to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum by Cleveland Cliffs, Inc., was held near the head end of the train. The 4211 was on the lead of the last taconite train to be operated over this line, on July 19, 2001. The two passenger specials were the first trains to run over this line since the final LTV train ran on Aug 8, 2001 to pick up some bad-order cars. Since the line had been closed for over a year, the passenger trains had to stop at all major public crossings for the crew to flag them, since the automatic grade crossing signals were inoperative. Photo runbys were held at the east portal of 1800-foot long Cramer tunnel at milepost 62.4 on both trips. Cramer tunnel is the only tunnel on this line and is the only tunnel in Minnesota bored through solid rock.

Both trips ran smoothly, with no major problems encountered either day. The many volunteers of the "Friends of the 261" and the Lake Superior Railroad Museum worked hard to make these trips the big success they were, and the passengers who rode the two specials were greatly appreciative of their efforts.

New Route Miles in Eastern Canada

Part 2 – Conclusion – By Miles Post

Aug 29, 2002 saw me saying goodbye to Candy as she had to return to California for some other commitments. I rented a car and spent the day exploring the area between Halifax and Truro, managing to get a fine photo of VIA's train #15, the westbound "OCEAN" running along Shubenacadie Lake near Sandy Cove.

The next day I went to Halifax's airport and met Linda, an accountant friend of mine who would be accompanying me for the remainder of the trip. Linda and I have some history in accumulating rare and interesting railroad mileage in North America.

Linda is fluent in French, and that would come in handy while we were in Quebec. Most Quebecois are bilingual, but they're more comfortable speaking French and, without the problem of things getting "lost in the translation," I was able to negotiate a few things that I probably wouldn't have been able to pull off by speaking only English.

We would be logging quite a few miles in our rental car, picking it up in Halifax and turning it in eight days later in Montreal. One of our first orders of business was to drive to New Glasgow, so she could recuperate from her long transcontinental "red eye" flight and also for us to be in position for the ferry to Prince Edward Island the next morning.

Even though the five-year-old Confederation Bridge connects PEI with New Brunswick, ferry service continues to link the east end of the island with Nova Scotia. We rode Northumberland Ferry Lines' "HOLIDAY ISLAND" between Caribou, NS and Woods Island, PEI. Once on the island, I was again reminded that I was making this visit to PEI about thirty years too late. Evidence was still apparent of Canadian National's presence on the island in the form of visible rights-of-way and depots converted to other uses. For example, the depot at Iona has been relocated and now houses "Happy Red's Dairy Bar/Folk Art Store--'Home of Cap'n Grumpy's Lobster Tings" along the Trans Canada Highway into Charlottetown.

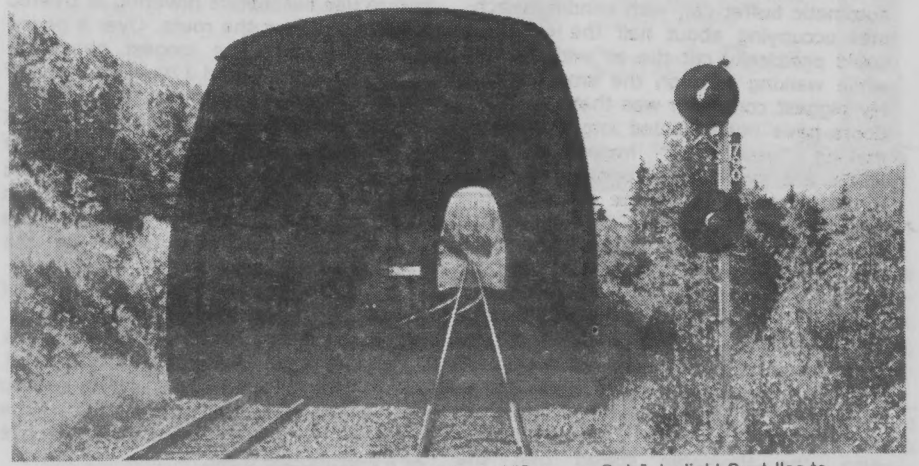
Had I visited this island in the late 1960's, I could have ridden trains 115-116, that ran from Moncton to Charlottetown, being loaded onto a ferry mid-trip. They were discontinued Oct 26, 1968 or possibly survived a few months longer, as winter road replacement was the emphasis of the service in the final years.

The Borden-Summerside-Tignish set of four mixed trains were gone by the timetable of Oct 26, 1969. Mixed trains M235-M236, that ran Moncton-Sackville-Borden-Charlottetown (ex Sunday) and shown in the April 1969 timetable, were gone by the fall of 1969.

The "Rails-To-Trails" people have been busy on PEI, converting much of the right-of-way into hiking trails. The depot at Borden, a wooden caboose at Wellington and some other rolling stock and buildings contribute to a small recognition of the existence of the railroad. It's noteworthy that this entire Canadian province has basically kissed off its railroad. Will that phenomena spread like a cancer? Let's hope not.

After paying the $37.75 (CDN) toll and driving across the impressive 12.9-kilometre Confederation Bridge back to New Brunswick, Linda and I logged some serious highway mileage to Matane, Quebec to be in position for another ferry departing the next morning, Sunday Sep 1st. The "N.M. CAMILLE-MARCOUX", a 1974 product of Marine Industrie Limitee of Sorel, Quebec, took us across the 55.3-km width of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Godbout, on the north shore (1). The ship has a capacity of 600 passengers and 120 vehicles. While on board, I spoke briefly with the man who just happens to be in charge of maintenance for the Quebec-Cartier Railroad.

After a leisurely drive to Sept-Iles, Linda and I were ready to log some new mileage on the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railroad (2), a line built in the



Opposite page: The QNS&L's Monday northbound "Summer Only" daylight Sept-Iles to Labrador City train, shown at Sept-Iles before departure on Sep 2, 2002.
Above: A unique corrugated metal snow shed protects the south switch of Premio siding at milepost 79 on the QNS&L, photographed on Sep 3. All photos by the author.

early 1950s to tap iron reserves in northern Quebec and Labrador. The railroad operates a 260.6-mile line between Sept-Iles and Carol Lake (Labrador City), in addition to a 129.2 mile branch to Schefferville, Quebec.

A few weeks previously I had made a few phone calls to a travel agency in Sept-Iles that handles ticketing for QNS&L and learned of the railroad's basic up-one-day-back-the-next schedule. I booked Linda and myself on Monday's northbound summer seasonal train to Labrador City, with a return on Tuesday's southbound train. To complicate matters, for the first time, these trains were only operating every OTHER week this year! I planned Wednesday to be a "free" day to goof around in Sept Iles and environs (it turned out the weather was lousy that day). On Thursday, we'd journey northbound on the weekly train to the dormant mining town of Schefferville, Quebec and wrap things up by returning the following day, Friday, Sep 6th.

Monday and Tuesday's train to/from Labrador City consisted of SD40-2CLC # 315, baggage 13521 (ex VIA/CN 9601); head-end-power car 13520; food service-coach 13515; smoking coach 13519; and coach 13517. Except for 13521, all of the cars were built by ACF and had Southern Railway heritage. They had recently been refurbished and were actually very nice. The food service car was similar to an SP automatic buffet car, with vending machines occupying about half the car. One could practically cut the air with a knife while walking through the smoking car. My biggest complaint was that the Dutch doors have been welded into one piece, making "vestibuling" impossible. The RDCs are no longer running and the former Wabash ACF dome car has been permanently removed from service. Apparently, Transport Canada was concerned about issues of emergency escape capabilities and safety glass in the dome.

The QNS&L public timetable yields rather cryptic information at best. No train numbers are shown, nor are intermediate times at stations or arrival times at end points. The only thing shown is the departure time out of the originating city. Also, the timetable stated that the Monday-Tuesday summer seasonal daytime trains to/from Labrador City would cease operating at the end of August, yet here we were riding them on Sep 2nd and 3rd. I later found out the operating crews don't even use train numbers to refer to the trains. They just use the lead locomotive number as a reference when calling the dispatcher. For anyone planning a trip to ride the QNS&L, I'd strongly suggest calling the travel agency in Sept-Iles, Vacances Inter, Inc., to inquire about the latest operational strategies. Ask for Celine. She was very helpful and handled ticketing with a credit card over the phone, besides having the tickets waiting for us at the front desk of our motel. Their phone number is (418) 962-9411.

Riding the QNS&L is, in some ways, similar to riding "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride" at Disneyland. How so? On the Disneyland ride, things are bland and boring until you punch through the set of double doors and the "magic" of the ride really takes off. On the QNS&L, things are rather bland and boring until you exit a 2,197 ft. tunnel at Milepost 11.5. Immediately after exiting the tunnel, the line crosses the Moisie River on a 900-ft bridge soaring 155 ft. above water level. Then the train twists and turns along a narrow rock shelf for about 15 miles, opposite from sheer rock faces 2,000 ft. high. It kind of reminded me of Union Pacific's route through Feather River Canyon in Northern California, without State Highway 70.

When the QNS&L was constructed in the early 1950s, it penetrated an area so wild and isolated that surveying crews had to use helicopters hovering at treetop height to lay out the route. Over a period of three years, the longest peacetime airlift in history ferried 170 million tons of machinery to 13 airstrips in a region where temperatures can vary from -55 degrees to +100 degrees F. The line includes two tunnels, 19 major bridges and over 200 miles of track laid across muskeg. Jules Timmins, a noted mine owner, drove the last spike on the railroad on Feb 13, 1954.

At MP 68.6, one can catch a brief glimpse of the 200 ft. high Tonkas Falls. On the Menihek Subdivision, the track runs alongside Menihek Lake for 70 miles. At MP 329.5, the line crosses over the top of Menihek Dam. The best viewing can be obtained by sitting on the left-hand side of a northbound train.

Weather extremes were made evident when I noticed snow sheds made of corrugated metal that have been erected over the dual control power switches at

(continued on page 19)

RTN Train of the Year

RTN's 27th annual Train of the Year selection, for the year 2002, goes to the *Sunset Limited*.

In most cases of our selections over the years, the trains honored have been those that were outstanding during a given year by reason of some innovation or feature that highlighted their operation. But in some instances trains were chosen because of some negative factors that made them stand out.

In the case of the *Sunset Limited*, the train has (inappropriately) been under fire from government leaders because of its alleged poor financial performance, and has been criticized by others for its poor timekeeping.

The train is on an important, in fact historic, route as the only passenger train that connects the southern portion of our nation. The line of its route almost draws the southernmost boundary of the US.

The *Sunset* was one of the last few trains of the Southern Pacific that survived until the startup of Amtrak in 1971. After Amtrak took over the route, in the 1970s and 1980s there were frequent rumors that the train would begin daily service. But it remains a tri-weekly (try weakly?) operation.

The many citizens who rely on the *Sunset* for travel love the train in spite of its problems. The problems it has are created out of the stupidity and carelessness of man, not out of any negative features of the route itself. The route has value not just for historic or nostalgic reasons but for its usefulness and even critically usefulness in times of threat and stress upon our travel modes.

The *Sunset* has been placed at the top of the federal DOT's hit list, allegedly losing $347 per passenger. We won't discuss the merits of that accusation here; please see pp. 17-18 for that discussion. But note that on p. 17 Union Pacific's CEO is quoted (from Railway Age) as saying "We do want to be a good partner with Amtrak and we're doing our best to get our railroad upgraded on the Amtrak routes and work with them to improve performance."

The UP seems to hold out hopes for the future that the Amtrak trains on its lines (the *Sunset* among them) can perform better. Rail advocates also hope that the route can be saved. Saving it is akin to saving a part of America, both historic and critically important for the present and the future.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Mar 15: Rhode Ireland Limited. Boston-Middleboro on MBTA, bus to Newport RI via Fall River. Old Colony svc; Old Colony & Newport Scenic charter train, many options. $30-$75. Mass. Bay RR Enthusiasts 27 Beale St #7, Dorchester MA 02124.

Mar 31-Apr 13: Midnight Blue Express. From London, air to Istanbul. Tour Anatolian Turkey by charter tour train, in part w/ steam locos from 6 TCDD classes. Ascutney Travel Inc, 46 Tremont Square, Claremont NH 03743. 603-542-8782.

May 3: Rare miles ex-Seaboard Air Line Cordele to Plains GA, RT. May 4: ex-Central of Georgia, Smithville GA to Eufala AL RT. Info: Stephen Syfrett, Box 72423, Albany GA 31708-2423. Phone 229-438-7088. On Web, www.acisal.org.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of operation. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 or e-mail to rtn@trainweb.com.

MIDWEST REPORT

At the Tennessee Central Railway Museum in Nashville on Jan 18 Stan Brandt of the 20th Century RR Club photographed these E units, two days after a 7-inch snowfall.

St. Louis rail passengers have tolerated Amtrak's "Amshack" in that city for almost 25 years. Previous mayors have promised a $45 million replacement that has not materialized. Now ground-breaking is tentatively set for this spring for a scaled-down $25 million facility, the Intermodal Transportation Center. Planners hope to have it operational by the end of 2004.

St. Louis Union Station was earlier converted into a commercial structure that Amtrak opted out of, partly because of cost. The new building would be next to a light rail station, making a convenient location for travelers continuing or arriving on transit.

Planners are aware that Chicago to St. Louis is a pilot corridor for Amtrak's Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, and would like a presentable station in their city. They are also aware that money is hard to come by in the state coffers; it is not even clear that Missouri can come up with a $1.2 million supplemental funding request to assure that the St. Louis to Kansas City rail service is not reduced by half. State Senator Jon Dolan told the St. Louis Riverfront Times, "I grew up with mass transit, and I certainly understand how important it is. However, there are some tough decisions around the corner. If we need to reduce the schedule to one train, I think we can live."

New Orleans' new Canal Street streetcar line is scheduled to open by Oct 2003, though the federal DOT wants to cut its 80% financing to 60%. Such a cut would jeopardize another planned streetcar line, the Desire line that roughly duplicates the route of the streetcar in the play "A Streetcar Named Desire". (That original line was turned into a bus route in 1948.)

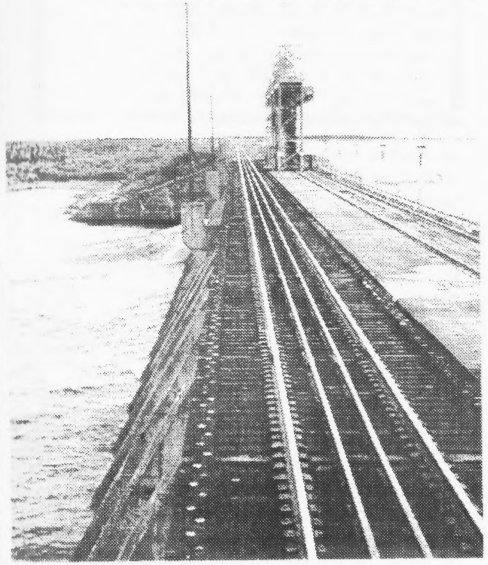
New Orleans presently has the Riverfront Streetcar and the St. Charles line, the latter apparently being the world's oldest continuously-operating streetcar line.

Beech Grove, IN was the scene of an Amtrak ceremony Jan 30 when the rail corporation returned two Superliner sleeping cars to service, the first of 105 cars accumulated over the past four years for repair that Amtrak did not budget in the past. Over the next two years Amtrak hopes to restore 21 cars, though these hopes rest upon Amtrak's receiving the $1.2 billion federal funding it seeks.

Amtrak will close its Chicago reservations center Dec 31, 2003 because of excess capacity. Amtrak said that with Internet sales increasing, call volume is down. The announcement created an uproar among Illinois officials and rail advocates. The center employs 270 people. Amtrak said that some of them could be relocated elsewhere. The move is supposed to save Amtrak millions of dollars annually, but critics noted that Amtrak would also spend several millions in shutdown costs.

Riverdale IL has innovative plans to build a "Network Station" not far from the Ivanhoe Metra station. It would include public facilities for electronic networking, Internet, video conferencing, etc. The plans were researched using state DOT funding for transit-oriented development.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS



Another photo from Miles Post's Eastern Canada trip report (see p. 10): The QNS&L Menihek Subdivision crosses the top of Menihek Dam at milepost 329.5. Photo dated Sep 6, 2002.

The federal DOT is using the statistic "loss per passenger" on Amtrak to support its case that long-distance trains are big money-losers and that it would be cheaper to give the rail passengers airline tickets than it would be to support Amtrak.

Editors across the nation are picking up the DOT figures and terms, as they generally do, uncritically and spreading the [to rail advocates erroneous] message that some or all long-distance train routes should be shut down for reasons of economy.

Rail advocates who are more analytic have not accepted the use of "loss per passenger" as the best statistic to compare train route performance. For instance advocate Howard Dash, using data from Amtrak's 2000 Annual Report and from the GAO report on 1997 train performance, calculated comparisons of Amtrak NE Corridor, Intercity (most long distance trains) and West business unit performance.

The Amtrak Annual Report found that in terms of "loss per passenger mile" (as opposed to "loss per passenger") the Intercity business unit performed best, with a loss per passenger mile of $.058, while Amtrak West had a similar loss of $.074 and the NE Corridor business unit had the heaviest loss, at $.082.

Said Mr. Dash, "By the loss per passenger mile figure, the NE Corridor is clearly the biggest loser and Intercity the best performer. By every business standard I understand, loss per passenger mile, not loss per passenger, is the indicator used to measure performance in the transportation industry."

The DOT should know this, but rail advocates assume, with good reason, that the DOT doesn't care if it distorts the true transportation picture to make its anti-rail passenger case.

The loss picture for long-distance trains is greater under "loss per passenger" because the figures are not weighted for the length of trips. NE Corridor trips are, of course, shorter than trips on the long distance trains; there are many more riders but shorter distances, so the large rider total under "loss per passenger" distorts the statistics and makes the Corridor performance look better by giving each rider an equal weight in the calculations regardless of how long his trip (or how much his fare).

Is it anti-NEC to think such thoughts about the NE Corridor? Not at all. Rail advocates do not want the Corridor to be discontinued. There is no danger that it will be. Imagine the disaster if rail service along the populous Northeastern coast were suddenly halted!

Rail advocates merely want decisions to be made on factual evidence, not on arguments filled with distortions and lies. The radical bean-counters in the federal government have always been opposed to subsidized rail passenger service, though not to subsidized highway and air service. (The difference in subsidization of these modes is that the subsidies are largely hidden in the case of the non-rail services.)

Since the NE Corridor is beyond attack, they must attack the other passenger trains. They don't want the public to recognize that there are any statistics that favor the financial performance of the other trains over the corridor trains.

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As we go to press, word from Washington is that budget arbiters seem set to give Amtrak $1.05 billion for the current fiscal year, up considerably from the House's earlier figure of $762 million, but less than the $1.2 billion Amtrak requested and that the Senate approved. The questions unanswered at this point are whether the $1.05 billion will stick in the final, huge $396 billion spending bill, and whether Amtrak will find this amount enough to maintain the system through September. RTN is guessing that President Bush would not veto the bill because of that one relatively small item for Amtrak.

Amtrak President David Gunn has already told Administration officials, leveling with them, that for FY2004 and beyond, Amtrak would need even more: up to $2 billion annually over the next five years. He also stated that Amtrak will never be profitable. Speaking on CNN, Gunn said "one of the myths surrounding Amtrak is that it can make money. Amtrak was created when the private sector...gave up on passenger service. They could not make money in a much easier time... I think, realistically, passenger rail service is not going to be profitable. Even the Northeast Corridor covers its operating costs, but it doesn't generate capital."

He explained that much of the higher amounts needed by Amtrak in the future must go to restoring its equipment and facilities "to a state of good repair."

The Bush Administration, releasing their 2004 budget figures in early Feb, said they would request about $900 million for Amtrak. That would be about half the amount that Gunn has in mind.

The $1.05 billion figure being heard in Congress presently represents slightly more than the current rate at which Amtrak is being funded under various continuing resolutions: $1.039 billion.

A major report, "Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation", was released earlier this year by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. It was the first time that AASHTO has issued such a document. The report says "long-distance trains serve a basic transportation role in many markets throughout the United States" and "provide an alternative form of travel during periods

NEWS IN THIS ISSUE IS UPDATED THROUGH FEBRUARY 10, 2003.
Contributors to this issue not otherwise identified include Robert Abraham, Howard Bender, George Danchisen, Ken Maylath, Gene Poon, Ray Saunders, Barry Steinberg, Ed Von Nordeck and Walter Zullig.

of severe weather conditions or emergencies that affect other modes of transportation."

Phoenix, Arizona transit officials have reason to celebrate: the federal DOT in late Jan approved starting environmental studies of their proposed light rail project. Phoenix Mayor Rimsza said "Light rail is on time, on budget and will be operating at the end of 2006." The federal decision allows local officials to begin purchasing needed land for the rail route, which will run along Camelback Road, 19th Avenue, Central Avenue, Washington St and Apache Boulevard.

In Texas transit, the Austin-San Antonio commuter rail district was officially formed on Feb 7. Its existence had been approved six years earlier. The area is looking toward commuter rail to connect San Antonio and Georgetown TX.

MARC is putting back into service six coaches of 1950s vintage that it retired over a year ago, on the Brunswick and Camden lines, and is buying more from Chicago, to relieve overcrowding on the popular commuter rail service.

An economic stimulus bill was introduced in the House Jan 28 by Oregon Democrat Peter DeFazio, reported NARP. The bill, H.R. 396, the Emergency Anti-Recession Act, includes high-speed rail bonding, allowing Amtrak to sell over a 10-year period $15 billion in bonds.

Amtrak and Hotels.com announced an arrangement Feb 4 whereby Amtrak reservation agents can connect passengers up with hotels.

The FRA approved a plan in late Jan by which Bombardier can make permanent repairs to *Acela* power units.

Department of corrections:
On page 3 at the top, two train listings were omitted: Add NB train M126, replacing AX2116, lv WAS 7:01pm and ar NYP 10:05pm. Add NB discontinued AR138, which left WAS at 8:11pm and ar NYP 11:32pm. On page 4, first line: it should read "slower speed—60 mph—while the STB".

The *Heartland Flyer* is temporarily leaving southbound from Oklahoma City an hour later, at 9:25am, due to BNSF track work. The change runs from Jan 20 to Feb 2-.

Oklahoma Republican Congressman Ernest Istook has taken over as chair of the Transportation Appropriations Committee. He told the *Daily Oklahoman* that 90% of a trip on the *Heartland Flyer* is subsidized. NARP, however, countered that in 2001 cost recovery, including state support, was not 10% but 112%, or 23% without the state money. Added NARP, "He did not acknowledge that [lack of full cost recovery] is also true for most transportation services (including highways and aviation) around the world."

The Administration has formed a hit list of six long-distance passenger trains that it believes are special money-losers (see also article on next page). In responding to this charge from the federal DOT, NARP said in a Feb 3 news release:

"The Budget, at page 231, lists six Amtrak routes together with their 2001 loss per passenger, under the heading "Train or Plane?" The headline and text seem not to reflect an understanding of the high percentage of Amtrak passengers who use intermediate stations rather than travel the entire length of a route. Also, the statement that "routes regularly lose hundreds of dollars each time a passenger steps aboard" is an inaccurate way to complain about the average loss per passenger, which--obviously--goes down every time another passenger steps aboard.

Gunn already has dealt with two of the routes, and a third simply does not belong on any list that is based on economic efficiency.

As for individual routes targeted in the budget:

- On January 6, Gunn sent the required 180-day advance notice for discontinuance of the *Kentucky Cardinal,* meaning the train will cease early in July. This train was inaugurated as part of Amtrak's ill-fated express cargo initiative. We would have preferred to see it extended to Nashville, but this depends on state funding which seems unlikely.
- Effective February 10, the *Pennsylvanian* will be converted from a Philadelphia-Chicago train on an express-oriented, passenger-unfriendly schedule to a New York-Pittsburgh train on a faster, passenger-friendly schedule.
- The *Southwest Chief* (Chicago-Kansas City-Albuquerque-Flagstaff-Los Angeles) ranks fifth out of 19 long-distance trains in terms of operating ratio (costs divided by revenues) based on Fiscal 2001 numbers in the Amtrak Reform Council's final report. The problem evidently is DOT's use of a measure that does not track with economic performance -- "subsidy per passenger" -- rather than operating ratio (or subsidy per passenger-mile). Obviously, however, the use of any measure will leave one route in last place and thus a tempting target, whatever the absolute numbers involved.

Two of the other three routes -- *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* -- have had terrible on-time performance on Union Pacific, driving up Amtrak's costs and hurting revenues, but this should be temporary. It stems in part from intense track work (due to deferred maintenance on former Southern Pacific) on a heavily-used single-track railroad. In the January issue of *Railway Age* magazine, Union Pacific CEO Dick Davidson is quoted: "There have been times when our performance handling Amtrak trains hasn't been as good as Amtrak would hope it would be, or as we would hope it would be. Following the [Southern Pacific] merger, we identified about $1.5 billion in incremental capital that needed to be spent to put our infrastructure in good shape, and while we've worked through a large amount of that, there's still more to be done ... We do want to be a good partner with Amtrak, and we're doing our best to get our railroad upgraded on the Amtrak routes and work with them to improve performance ... "

Publicly announcing its intentions for next year's budget vis-à-vis Amtrak (the FY 2004 budget, which begins Oct 1, 2003), the federal DOT said the following on Feb 3:

"Amtrak reform can wait no longer. The 2004 Budget follows through on these ideas by proposing to eliminate underused and inefficient long-distance train routes and reducing overhead operations where other options could perform them more efficiently. To facilitate these changes, the budget proposes $900 million to support operations, expand Amtrak's capital and infrastructure maintenance programs, and begin to address structural reform through measures the Administration believes will improve Amtrak's future viability. In an effort to ensure that states play a major role in determining the route structure of a national passenger rail system, the Administration will encourage states to contribute to those routes they believe are critical to their transportation needs."

The DOT went on to discuss long-distance routes, naming those they deem the most "inefficient":

"One of the reasons behind Amtrak's fiscal difficulties is its continued operation of several routes that regularly lose hundreds of dollars each time a passenger steps aboard. Below are the routes with the largest losses per passenger in 2001:

- Sunset Limited: –$347 (Los Angeles to Orlando)
- Pennsylvanian: –$292 (Philadelphia to Chicago)
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- Kentucky Cardinal: -$212 (Louisville to Chicago)

For several of these trains, it would literally be cheaper for Amtrak to buy each passenger a plane ticket to the next destination. For example, a round trip ticket for direct flights between San Antonio and Chicago (the Texas Eagle route) can be purchased for as little as $216."

There is obviously a great deal in the above statements (which are excerpted from the full DOT release) that rail advocates would be prepared to refute. Notably, the financial figures on the long-distance routes are widely believed to be erroneous, and even if they were correct there are other important mitigating factors to be considered that would argue against the wisdom of lopping those routes out of the national system. For one thing, would it be worth the supposed monetary savings to cut most of the southern tier of the nation off from direct interstate rail passenger service—including the populous cities of Texas and the whole of Southern California?

One rail advocate-analyst saw more than a coincidence in the DOT's proposed Amtrak funding: "Amtrak President Gunn has stated repeatedly that $1.2 billion is the amount needed to fund the full national system for the current year, and that the direct cash loss of the national network is $300 million. Subtract $300 million from $1.2 billion, and we get $900 million, the amount of the Bush proposal for FY04. It sounds as if they are saying that all of Amtrak's woes would be ended by discontinuing all long-distance service, and we rail advocates know that that is not the case. It's clear that the only "reform" this administration will settle for means handing Amtrak's long-distance passengers to the airlines and the highway interests."

The DOT also proposed that some Amtrak employees be offered buyouts to cut labor costs.

Note that two of the trains on the DOT "hit list" above are already being scaled back or dropped by Amtrak: the *Pennsylvanian* is being cut back to a Pittsburgh to NY route instead of Philadelphia-Chicago. The *Kentucky Cardinal* is being discontinued.

As an aside, a Reuters news report on the DOT release said of that agency, "It listed several [long distance trains] that lose a combined $1500 per passenger." Adding up the supposed losses from several trains seems an odd way of further emphasizing the DOT's disputed claims.

Eastern Canada – Continued from p. 12.

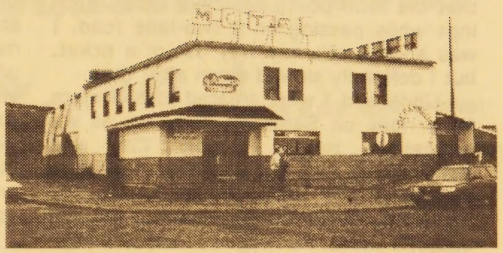
Ross Bay Junction and Premio siding. This railroad is unique in that 260-car, 22,000 ton iron ore unit trains with mid-train helpers are being operated with a one-man crew. As an added safety feature, the location of trains is monitored with GPS satellite technology. Helicopters are used for track patrols and other miscellaneous chores. On Friday's train, a medical emergency required a coordinated meet between the train and a helicopter so a passenger could be airlifted to a hospital in Labrador City.

Thursday and Friday's train to/from Schefferville was the same as Monday's consist, except the following cars were added: coach 13516; food service-coach 13513; coaches 13512, 13518, boxcar 1695 and mechanical reefer 1559. The reefer is used for transporting animal carcasses that hunters have bagged and processed meat from a facility in Schefferville.

It was quite a sight seeing seven passenger cars practically filled to capacity with an eclectic mix of hunters, fishermen, miners, natives (Indians) and, of course, a few railfans, including one from Belgium.

The railroad serves a region inhabited by the Inuit, Naskapi and Montagnais indigenous peoples, formerly referred to as "Indians" in a more politically incorrect time. One of the security guards on the train was fluent in the Montagnais language, and the signs in the vestibules advising passengers not to loiter there were printed in three languages -- French, English and, I assume, Inuit.

Schefferville is one of those towns like Lynn Lake, Manitoba -- at the "end of steel" and definitely off the beaten path, owing its existence solely to the ore mined out of the earth. Even though there's an estimated 200 million tons of iron ore within a two-mile radius of the town center, the mines have closed and the vastly shrunken populace is more or less waiting to see what the future will bring. It may be a long wait. I heard several reasons why the mines have closed; everything from an undesirable, low-grade ore in the area, to the difficulty of performing mining operations in the winter to the high compensation requirements demanded by the Natives for any new mining activities.



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The QNS&L has yanked out the CTC and further downgraded the 129.2-mile line from Ross Bay Jct. For a variety of reasons, Schefferville and the railroad serving it have a somewhat cloudy future. The railroad continues to serve a vital role, as, like Churchill, Manitoba, there is no highway access into the town and everything must be brought in by rail.

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